

by Shauna Rose Hermel
Editor



Imagining the future

Parking garages unnecessary? At first take, this seems illogical. It actually seems counter to reality as I search for a parking spot downtown. But as futurist Lowell Catlett (see page 24) explained during the Angus Convention last fall, it seems only logical.

I couldn't wait to get a car and have my own wheels when I was 16. Actually, I was a little envious of my Kansas cousins who could get a permit when they were 14. I think Mom and Dad were just as ready for me to get my driver's license, because it would lessen their time as chauffeurs and enable me to run those errands that take somebody two hours away from the hayfield or the processing pen.

We craved our independence. However, urban youth these days don't necessarily aspire to drive themselves.

When you think about it, why would they? Why pay the expense of a car, insurance, garage, etc., if you can get an Uber or some other service to drive you almost any place you want to go or deliver almost anything you want to buy?

Why drive when the autonomous vehicle Catlett describes would let you relax and have a chat with three friends on your journey?

If you don't have a vehicle to park at the convention center — assuming the Uber driver is going to go pick up three more fares while you're watching the concert — why would you need a garage?

Hey, maybe they could make the parking spots big enough for a dually pickup at the hotel for the National Junior Angus Show.

Maybe they'll turn the parking garages into hydroponic gardens to provide not just local, but back-door

or next-door herbs and vegetables to supply the artisan cafés in the shopping malls.

As Catlett pointed out, changes in consumer behavior can have huge impacts on industry. Those choices affect more than the auto industry. They affect fuel, auto repair and service, parking, and all the industries that supply parts for cars.

What will fewer vehicles mean for roads and bridges?

How will the trickle-down affect us in agriculture?

Ag not immune

We in agriculture might be a ways downstream from some of the changes, but we are not immune.

We've already been through tremendous change caused by indirect influences.

Think back to World War II days. Lard was at a premium and the U.S. government encouraged housewives to save all their fat trimmings to turn them in for the cause. Fat was used to make glycerine and glycerine could be used to make explosives to wage war, thus a demand for fat hogs.

Decades later, in relatively peaceful times, with obesity the enemy, the government backed a war on fat and ushered in an age where fat hogs weren't just unwanted, they would be refused.

Today, autonomous combines are already a reality.

How about an autonomous fence

checker? How would that change the way you interact with your herd?

Truly, by envisioning what might be instead of being reactionary, we can look for opportunities.

Bull season

In that frame of mind, think about the direction of your herd. How will changes in the future affect the genetics your customers will seek and the services they will need?

I'm not talking about the autonomous trailer that will deliver the bull after purchase.

Study the comments in Troy Smith's article, "Stud Worthy," on page 70. It shows a trend that is influencing our bull market today.

Many times, when we think of trying to get a bull into a stud, we're thinking in terms of semen sales to seedstock producers, but Troy's sources agree the commercial market is their volume market.

More and more commercial breeders are using artificial insemination (AI). That changes the type of bull the studs look to buy or lease. How does it change the market you are selling bulls to? Does it require a different genetic profile? Does it create a new market for you or a different service opportunity to provide to your customer?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shauna".

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